



Al-Risala 1995

January-February

God-Given Hope

If a misfortune befalls you, it is the fruit of your own labours. He forgives much. (42:30)

This verse of the Qur'an tells us that whenever a man is, afflicted by some misfortune, it is necessarily the result of one or more of his own actions. Complaining against others in this world is meaningless. When everyone must suffer the consequences of his own actions, making protests and complaints against others is only a waste of time. It will in no way solve the problem.

This is a system devised by nature itself. It has good tidings, and great hope for us, in that it has placed our problems in our own hands. It has not left us to be dependent on the charity and compassion of others.

If the problems faced by us had been caused by others, then we should have been dependent upon others for their solution. We should have had to wait for others' kindness. But God has devised the system of world in such a way that He has made everyone's concerns his own personal affair. That is, everyone can construct his life by dint of his own efforts. Everyone's future is in his own hands.

Sometimes one has to incur a loss due to one's own foolishness; much harm can be avoided by adopting wise ways. Sometimes an initiative goes awry for lack of planning. But there will always be other chances to work in future in a planned way so that the mistake may be rectified. Sometimes by being hasty a man invites trouble, but then he always has the possibility of turning the situation to good account by adopting the ways of patience and fortitude. Sometimes people bring ruin upon themselves by being too emotional, but they too have the chance to reach their goal of success by remaining cool and rational in their approach on subsequent occasions.

(205:5-6)

The Awakening of Man

Just over a year ago when I was in Jabalpur, I met a middle-aged gentleman by the name of Abdus Salam Akbani from Nagpur. In the course of conversation, he told me an incident in his own life, which gives us a great lesson.

It seems that four year prior to an encounter, he had arranged to buy a piece of land in Nagpur from a Hindu Landowner, One Parbhakar Hazare, for the sum six lakhs of rupees. It was settled that Abdus Salam would pay two lakh in advance. Then after a period of six months, the land would be registered in his name, at which time the remainder would be paid in full. But after just two months, the landowner asked for and received a further two lakhs, so that now four out of the agreed six lakhs had been paid to him. During this period, the price of the land went up, and the landowner could not resist the temptation of asking for even more.

When, after six month, Abdus Salam asked Prabhakar Hazare to arrange for the registration of the land, the latter kept postponing it on one pretext or the other. Hazare was a lawyer, and he thought if Abdus Salam went to court, he would so complicate matter for him that he would finally be compelled to meet his demands.

One day Abdus Salam went to see Mr. Hazare, found the latter's father in law, Mr. Sawarkar, also present. Mr. Sawarkar who was a member of the RSS, was very provocative in his manner. Finally, he said, "What can you do after all? Go to court? If you do, we'll see to it that you wear out a lot of shoes leather!"

Abdus Salam replied that that would happen only if he went court. And if he didn't go to court, how would they make him run back and forth. Mr. Sawarkar asked him what he actually proposed to do. Abdus Salam replied that he would appear him (Mr. Sawarkar) as his arbitrator. On the one side you have your son-in-law, and on the other your nephew (meaning Hazare and himself). "Now you can decide as it seems befitting to you."

Mr. Sawarkar's wife, who had overheard the conversation from an adjacent room, now beckoned to her husband to come and talk to her privately. When Mr. Sawarkar returned, he appeared to be a changed man. In the meanwhile, Mrs. Sawarkar brought tea for them. Mr. Sawarkar sipped his in silence. Then he asked Abdus Salam to come the next day, saying that the matter would then be settled.

The next day, when he reached there, he was taken by Mr. Sawarkar himself to the court in his car. Being a man of influence, he was able to get the land registry done the same day. Mr. Abdus Salam paid the same price as had been fixed earlier.

Mr. Sawarkar was so impressed by Abdus Salam that afterward, whenever he saw him passing by anywhere, he would stop his car to greet him and inquire after his health. One day they met by chance at the Housing Finance Board where Abdus Salam had gone on business. When Mr. Sawarkar saw him, he introduced him to the Director of the Board in said, "I have met many Muslims, but I have seen only one young father of an old man. And this is he – Abdus Salam. He has given me an important lesson, namely, that if one does not go to the court, one's shoes won't get worn out."

Although Mr. Sawarkar was associated with RSS, he was first and foremost a human being. The moment Mr. Abdus Salam had said, "I am your nephew and he is your son-in-law. Now you yourself become the arbitrator and decide for yourself," the "man" in Mr. Sawarkar was awakened.

When the inner man is awakened, you can be sure that the person concerned will always give a just verdict in his dealings with others. It is no longer within his power to be unjust and cruel or unjust.

(211:13)

The Matter of Life

All the things in the market are available on the payment of necessary price. The principle of the market, to be precise, is: you receive as much as you give neither more nor less. This principle is true for the entire human life as well. Someone has aptly said: give the world the best you have, and the best will come back to you.

If you are well-wisher of others, others will also respond the same way. If you talk to others gently, others too will return gentle words. If you honour others, others too will honour you.

This is a world of give and take. Here man finds only what he has given to others. In short others will behave with you just as you behave with them.

This means that in order to lead a life in this world, finding good atmosphere is in one's own power. You become friends of others and everyone will become your friend. You bear with the unpleasantness of others then you will find people around you who bear with the unpleasant thing from you. You benefit others and then you will find a world where everyone will be busy benefiting others.

If you want to live like a flower you will find your way to a bed of flowers. But if your existence is replete with thorns, you will find a world full of thorny shrubs.

(195:5)

Hypochondriasis

Hypochondria is a psychological disease. One who suffers from this disease Imagines that he has one or more physical complaints, although he is not actually ill. The hypochondriac becomes convinced that he is afflicted by disease, even although it is absent.'

A resident of Pune, Mr. Farhat Haroon Khan, once told me of such an instance. He had become acquainted with a 20-year old Arab student, who had come from Bahrain to Pune to pursue a course of higher studies. During his stay in India, the latter began to imagine that his health had been ruined by Indian food and that he was suffering from some fatal disease.

He asked Farhat Haroon to take him to a good doctor and Mr. Haroon obliged him by taking him to a Dr. S.M.H. Modi. Dr. Modi examined the student thoroughly and prescribed certain tests. Then after seeing all the reports, he asked Mr. Haroon to tell the Arab patient that he was 'as fit as a horse.'

After the doctor's thorough examination, the young Arab's worries immediately evaporated, and he began to live a normal life, just as if he had never taken ill.

This type of disease is not confined only to individuals. Sometimes an entire nation or community may suffer from it. This can be traced to wrong guidance by leaders who induce a fear psychosis in their followers by causing them to believe that they are surrounded by danger on all sides. The key to progress for such a nation is the ability to see such dangers for what they are – imaginary; and then to root out all fear from the national psyche. Then nothing can stand in the way of the country's success.

(196:15)

Training and Education

By August 1945, Japan had been totally ruined having lost its political freedom as well as its economic stability. What Japan did subsequently was to refrain from touching the problem of political freedom and give its full thrust to economic stability. This policy proved so successful that Japan is today reckoned as an industrial super power. By 1990 Japan had already given five billion dollars credit to the world. It is estimated that by 1995 the amount of this credit will have increased to ten billion dollars. While in 1945, Japan was under the political subjugation of America, today America has been brought under the economic subjugation of Japan.

Mr. Abu Zar Ghefari, a Pakistani columnist, went to Kabul in May 1992, 'where he met a Japanese journalist. He asked him the reason for the breath-taking and incredible success of Japan, how it had actually happened that the impossible could be turned into the possible.

He replied that the secret of Japan's striking success lay in the sterling character of Japanese nation. He explained, moreover, that since they were not rich in natural resources, they considered their children to be their greatest resource. Each Japanese house had been turned into a training ground for the children. The Japanese spent their best resources on the Education of children was something in which the Japanese spent. That is why their nation of today is wholly literate today. Illiteracy just does not exist in their country. If it is the head count of scientists, which makes a nation scientific that, the Japanese nation can be truly called a scientific nation.

This training and education has produced high national character among the Japanese, for instance, the Japanese are truly a nationalist nation. If the nation suffers from a one-rupee loss, a Japanese will be willing to incur a 100-rupee loss to save the nation from loss, and he would be proud to do so.

(Away Want, Lahore, July 12, 1992)

Japan completely shunned the path of confrontation with its opponent. Only then did it become possible for it to bring into existence a highly scientific society. This is the only way to success and progress in this world.

(202:16-17)

No End of Opportunities

Abdul Raman bin Maria bin Hisham (113-172 AH), an Umayyad prince, having shown early signs of talent and intelligence, was given royal training and a superb education to groom him, right from early childhood, for his future role of Caliph.

But in 132 A.H. the Umayyad dynasty was dealt a fatal blow by the Abbasids. When the Abbasid army entered Damascus, the capital, they were given orders to exterminate the Umayyads. At this point, Abdur Rahman was fortunately absent from the city. He had gone to a village on 'the banks of Euphrates where he had his farms and orchards. At the time of the genocide, the young prince was just twenty years of age.

When Abdur Rahman learnt that the Umayyads had been the victims of a general massacre, he hid himself in a camp under the trees. One day when he was in his camp his four year old son came running to him in a terrified state. The Abbasid soldiers had almost reached the orchard in their pursuit of him. He immediately picked up the child, ran to the river and swam across to the other side.

Although Abdur Rahman managed to flee from Damascus, the next few years proved very difficult for him. Always on the alert for his enemies, he would move, hungry and thirsty, from place to place, across rivers and through jungles. In this state of helplessness he came to Sabta, a place situated at the north coast of Africa. His future looked bleak. The prince had become a pauper and where, in his childhood, the crown of the Caliphate had awaited him, there was now not even a corner where he could take shelter in peace.

Yet, ultimately, into this state of utter frustration, there shone a ray of hope. It seemed that Andalusia, in the South of Spain, had become semi-independent. Damascus, the seat of the Caliphate, had lost its hold over it, thanks to communications taking months to cover the distance between Damascus, and Andalusia. Now in the absence of a strong leadership, the Muslims, had started fighting amongst themselves.

This state of affairs in Andalusia turned out to be a piece of good fortune for Abdur Rahman. Hearing that the Muslims were badly in need of a leader, he crossed the Straits of Gibraltar to reach Andalusia. His extraordinary capabilities and the fact of his being a crown prince immediately attracted attention. The people rallied to him and he was able to establish a firm rule in Andalusia. A man whose history had come to an end in Damascus now became the founder of brilliant cultural and academic progress in Andalusia. If he built this most illustrious career for himself in Cordova the seat of the Andalusian emirate, it was entirely due to his own courage and determination.

It is a fact that there is no end to the opportunities in this world. When one opportunity ceases to exist, some other opportunity always arises elsewhere. When one stage in a man's career comes to an end, there will always be the opportunity to enter a new phase.

But new opportunities will bear no fruit if they are not at once seized and availed of nothing ever happens on its own. But it takes a man of courage to grasp the opportunities that present themselves. He must also have the endurance and the determination for the struggle, which necessarily ensues. And if he possesses those essential qualities, there is no question of his being a failure.

This world has been devised by God so that man may succeed – but with a struggle. One who is too faint-hearted, too lacking in determination, or too impatient will give up the struggle sooner or later, and that is what will ultimately spell failure. He shall have to pay the price of his own shortcomings.

“For men, opportunities will never cease.” This is just like saying the sun will never cease to rise. Just as morning is always followed by night, so does success inevitably follow failure. However, just as the earth must revolve unceasingly if morning is to follow night so must man be unremitting in his struggle to reach his final goal.

(196:19)

The News of an Earthquake

On June 21, 1990 the north western part of Iran was hit by an earthquake so severe in its intensity that it left 80,000 death and 200,000 injured in its wake. A comment frequently heard at that time was that this was God's chastisement on the Iranians.

Such remarks are absurd. Any tragedy befalling this world is designed to make God's servants tremble in fear of their Maker, and are not occasions for righteous castigation of supposed wrongdoers. The truth is that this earthquake related neither to Iran's iniquity nor to God's chastisement. An earthquake is a geophysical event; it is meant as a lesson for everyone, and not just for the people of Iran, or any other country for that matter.

Every severe earthquake causes a similar amount of devastation. According to the *Times of India* of June 23, 1990, not a single house in the affected area had been left standing. In reality, an earthquake's true significance lies in its being a reminder of Qiamat (Doomsday). What happens before, during and after an earthquake is simply a miniature version of what will actually happen on a horrendous scale on the Day of Reckoning.

God has built this world as a temporary testing ground. When this period of trial is over, God will cause a severe earthquake to take place. At its impact all structures will collapse, all bastions of human greatness will simply vanish from the face of the earth, and civilization as we know it will cease to exist. Then God, in His omnipotence, will create a new world in which He will reward each of His creatures according to his or her deeds.

The correct attitude to natural calamities is that one should learn a lesson from them. Attributing them to the misdeeds of others will only bring down God's wrath upon one's own head.

11 January-February 1995

ISLAM AS IT IS

By Maulana Wahiduddin Khan

In Islam As It Is, Maulana Wahiduddin Khan presents the fundamental teachings of Islam in a manner, which will appeal directly to both general readers, and students of Islam.

Simple and straightforward in style, Islam As it is gives the reader an accurate and comprehensive picture of Islam – the true religion of submission to God.

(196:14)

A Vanished Dream

In the course of a speech, which he made at Lahore on February 3, 1884, Sir Sayyed made the following important point:

The educational institution called the Muhammadan Anglo Oriental College (now the Muslim University) we have established at Aligarh does not aim at differentiating between Hindus and Muslims. I accord equal status to Hindus and Muslims. I consider them as my two eyes.

(Collection of Lectures, p. 198)

In one of his letters, dated June 19, 1898 Swami Vivekananda stated that the essence of Hinduism was oneness. Islam's specialty was that it established such a practical example of human brotherhood and equality as had no parallel in human history. As such, both Hinduism and Islam had to play their part in the construction of India. Both Hindus and Muslims will have to participate in the building of a bright future for India.

(Letters of Swami Vivekananda, (p. 379-80).

When India was set free in 1947, there was every opportunity to construct a new India by making joint efforts. Two great leaders, one from each community, attempted to focus their followers' attention on the importance of this cause. Yet the advice they gave fell on deaf ears. No material progress ensued.

The reason was that, for the acceptance and carrying out of any suggestion, a price has to be paid, failing which there can be no concrete results. The price, which has to be paid – to put it briefly – is the exercise of patience.

Whenever people of different religious background live together, there will always be cause for complaint. Situation, which are unpleasant, are bound to arise. Now the price to be paid for social harmony is clearly toleration of the unpleasantness. Unfortunately, neither community was willing to pay that price. That was why the words of Sir Sayyed and Swami Vivekananda made no impression on their hearers, and the ideal social organization of their dreams could never become a reality.

(201'19)

Unification or Mob Hysteria?

An expert in human psychology has said:

Hate is in every way a much stronger passion than love. It is also a much stronger binding force. Lovers of humanity rarely bind themselves together: haters invariably do so. Nothing unites a people more effectively than a shared enmity for someone or some other community.

This applies to most of the major Indian organisations, be these Hindu or Muslim organisations. All these have been formed on the basis of a common enmity for some supposed enemy. If we were to give a title, which was applicable to all these organisations, the most apt one would be Organisations of haters of other communities.

Recent times have repeatedly seen 'exemplary unity' among Muslims. But this alleged unity is founded on hatred, not love. Repeatedly we have seen tens of thousands of Muslims gathered on a common platform, but each time this so-called brotherhood has been achieved by inciting people to unite against a common enemy. They have never been brought together on a large scale in the name of love for or well-wishing towards members of communities other than their own.

It almost invariably happens that our leaders arise, make fiery speeches to incite people against an other community, and thus manage to gather a large number of the Muslim public around them. And then they announce with enormous pride that an 'exemplary Islamic unity' has come into being. This is the greatest deception of perpetrated by our Muslim leaders in our times. It is one, which can only cause suffering to their followers.

The truth is that people massed together in this way should not be dignified with the expression 'unified group' but should be described rather as a mob brought together by hard instincts.

(196:9)

Nature's Teaching

Teak is a hard wood used in building and furniture making. It is produced mainly in Burma, but is also grown in India, Thailand, Indonesia and Sri Lanka. In India, it has been in use for over two thousand years.

The most important property of teak is its extraordinary durability. In ancient times boats and bridges were built of this wood and in buildings as old as a thousand years, teak beams are still found to be in excellent condition.

The main cause of the durability of teak wood is that, it is not eaten away by white ants. Wood serves as a food for white ants, and, once they have made inroads, it quickly disintegrates. Yet, foes as they are of wood in general, they pose no threat to teak.

What is the property, which keeps teak safe from the danger of white ants? The answer is quite simple. Teak has a bitter taste, which is not to the liking of the white ant.

This example of an inherent quality acting as a life-preserver shows us the way of nature. Nature wanted to preserve teak from the depredations of the white ant. To achieve this end, it did not formulate demands or utter protests. It simply endowed teak with such a property as would keep its insect attackers at bay.

Just as wood has an enemy in the white ant, so do men have their human enemies in this world. Now what should a man do to save himself from them? Taking a leaf out of nature's book, he should strive to produce in himself such qualities as will keep his enemies away from him, make them refrain from indulging in injurious courses of action.

(201:5)

The Pure in Heart

The Qur'an tells us that man's sole mainstay in the Hereafter will be the pureness of his heart (26:89). That is, only the pure in heart can gain entrance to paradise. Different commentators on the Qur'an have worded their explanations of this in a variety of ways, but the gist of what they say is largely the same. Here is what Ibn Kathir has written:

The sound heart is one, which knows no impurity or idolatry. According to Ibn Seerin, the sound heart is one which has fully realized that God is Truth and that Doomsday will certainly come – there is no doubt about it – and that God will certainly raise the dead from the grave. According to Ibn Abbas, a sound heart is one, which has borne witness that there is no god but God. According to Mujahid, Hasan and others, a sound heart is one to which idolatry is unknown. According to Sayeed ibn Musayyeb, a sound heart is an upright heart. It is the heart of the believer; the heart of an unbeliever and hypocrite is a diseased one. According to Abu Usman Nisapuri, it means a heart free from *bida* (inventions in religion) and content with the *sunnah* of the Prophet (3/339)

It is not just the aggregate of a man's good deeds, which provides the criterion for entrance into heaven, but rather his inward state. What will be of real value on Doomsday is the character a man has developed in this life. Those in possession of a divine (*rabbani*) personality, who are enlightened and aware, who are free of psychological complexities and negative attitudes, who have proved their ability to lead their lives on the level of divine nature, will find their entrance into heaven made easy.

(207:12-13)

A Lesson from History

The Abbasids wrested control of the Islamic Empire from the Umayyads in 750, and Baghdad replaced Damascus as the seat of the caliphate. Ill-equipped for this gigantic task, they had sought the support of Iranians, and it was through the latter's active military involvement that the Abbasids came to power. But the support given by the Iranians was neither short-lived nor without repercussion. It inevitably resulted in the Iranians making deep inroads into Muslim society and politics. While government policy under the Umayyads had focused on Arabization, with Islamization in its wake, now, under the Abbasids, it turned to Persianization as a result of the Iranian influence. This gave rise to a great number of problems, not the least of which the Caliphate's change of orientation.

In the words of a historian:

'Under the Abbasids the caliphate entered a new phase. Instead of focussing, as the Umayyads had done, on the West – on North Africa, the Mediterranean, and relations with southern Europe – the caliphate now turned eastward.' (1/7)

The seriousness of this situation will be realized if we think for a moment that had the Abbasids succeeded fully in their campaign, against Umayyads, the brilliant chapter of Islamic history known as 'Muslim Spain' would never have existed.

Not only did the Abbasid Caliphs give less attention to the western countries, but they also became the deadliest foes of those who were intent on the expansion of Islam. The Abbasids began killing each and every individual belonging to the Umayyad family. Had the conquest of Spain not been made under the Umayyads, and had the Umayyad prince, Abdur Rahman ad-Dakhil, not succeeded in saving his life and finding a refuge in Spain, the chapter of Islam's entry into Europe and Muslim Spain would perhaps never have been written.

A somewhat similar situation developed in India when the Mughal King, Humayun, was defeated by Sher Shah Suri, and thus deprived of the throne of Delhi from 1540 to 1555. During this period he fled to Iran to seek help from the Iranian emperor Tahmasp. The ruler of Persia helped him with a force of 14,000 men, with the assistance of which he was able to recover the throne of Delhi and re-establish the Mughal empire after a lapse of fifteen years.

But again, this resulted in strong Persian political and cultural influences spreading throughout the Mughal empire. The Persians were not interested in sciences. That is why during the entire Mughal period no advancement in the field of science was made. They were not even aware of the great progress made in this field during Muslim rule in Spain. Enamoured of the fine arts, they brought large numbers

of artists, painters, sculptors and poets to India. This influx of talent had a profound effect upon the Muslim society, which consequently took on many of the hues of Persian civilization.

These historical events teach us that whenever you succeed by seeking the help of another your success is no longer exclusively your own. The influence of the person or group from whom you sought assistance will certainly intrude, if not sooner, certainly later. In spite of your best efforts, you will not be able to distance yourself from this invasion.

To obviate such a situation, the proper way to proceed is to deal independently with one's undertakings, starting on a small scale and then endeavouring to advance in a gradual manner. That is the sole way to achieve true success.

Success must be attained slowly and steadily and not by leaps and bounds.

(211:16)

Patience and Da'wah

The moral character of the *da'i* must be marked by patience. It takes patience to wait for the right opportunities for *da'wah* work to arise, and it also takes patience for the right sets of conditions to be created. Those who are unwilling to remain patient in the face of ignorant obduracy and unpleasantness can never fulfill the true calling of the *da'i*.

Sir James Jeans, the renowned English scientist, once stated in the foreword to a book he had written on physics and philosophy in 1941, that the scientific study of the universe had led us to the point where it seemed to suggest that "the door may be unlocked, only if we could find the handle." (p. 16)

This notion was put into words by this English scientist at a time when Muslims the world over, provoked at the domination of English, were waging bloody war against them. When the Muslims looked at the English, they saw in them only hateful enemies. Had they displayed patience – even only temporarily – at their political domination, they would very soon have discovered that the "handle" the English sought to the door of Reality, was already available to Muslims in the form of the Qur'an.

With this knowledge their entire attitude towards the English would have drastically changed. Soon they would have come to regard the English as their *mad'u* (congregation) and not as rivals. And then instead of praying for their doom they would have prayed for their guidance, and reformation. As their well-wishers they would have told them that what they (the English) required to reach the destination of reality had already been sent by God in the form of the Qur'an.

Patience is the necessary condition of *da'wah* – where there is no patience there can certainly be no *da'wah*.

Islam's Peaceful Entry into India

In India, there is the widely held belief that the initial conversions to Islam was made by force. Yet, in no other country is there any oral legacy or written record of such happenings. It is only in India that it is repeatedly stressed that the local population was coerced by invaders into acceptance of Islam.

India's conquerors, albeit Muslims, were hardly Islamic zealots. Mahmud Ghaznavi, Shahabuddin Ghauri, Babar etc. came to India for the sole purpose of acquiring wealth and power. Ergo, the accusation that they were out to propagate Islam by the sword immediately falls to the ground. Yet, despite the total absence of any historical record of forced conversions over a period of a thousand years, stories of brutality began to be concocted under British rule which were eagerly seized upon by Hindu pundits anxious to demonstrate – with the addition of fanciful details – that, if there were millions of neo-converts in India, it was not due to any special virtue of Islam, or to any particular shortcoming of Hinduism, but to the force resorted to by Muslim conquerors at the time of conversion.

Hindu writers were not the originators of this misinformation, but merely copyists of British writers, some of whose works advanced theories, which are now logically untenable.

The first such book on the spread of Islam in India, *The Preaching of Islam*, was written by Dr. T.W. Arnold in 1896, when he was Professor of Persian at the Aligarh Muslim University. Linguistically gifted, and with access to valuable source material, Professor Arnold wrote most competently on this subject. In the context of India being frequently branded as an area of forced conversion, he repeats the then current allegations of Mahmud Ghaznavi's brutal massacre of Brahmans, Aurangzeb's persecution and the forcible circumcision effected by Muhammad bin Qasim, Hayder Ali, Tipu Sultan, etc. But he largely dilutes the impression made by this information by producing historical evidence to show that such conversions were far fewer in number than is generally believed and often of an impermanent nature. His main contention is that "among sixty-six millions of Musalmans there are vast numbers of converts, or descendants of converts, in whose conversion force played no part and the only influences at work were the teaching and persuasion of peaceful missionaries" (p. 254).

Citing the true reasons for the rapid expansion of Islam, Professor Arnold writes: "Foremost among these is the simplicity of the Muslim creed, there is no god but God; Muhammad is the Apostle of God. Assent to these two simple doctrine is all that is demanded of the convert ... This simple creed demands no great trial of faith, arouses as a rule no particular intellectual difficulties and is within the compass of the meanest intelligence" (p. 413).

There were, of course, other inducements. 'Rulers such as Khiljis and Tughlaqs encouraged their subject to embrace Islam by heaping gifts and honours upon them. Another powerful incentive to conversion

was the access it gave to the court. Although by the time of Akbar, Hinduism had come to be respected and the policy of non-interference in religion was being strictly followed, Islam still gained many converts who were motivated by self-interest, viz. certain branches of the Rajput aristocracy. Other Muslim rulers were either too busy waging wars or too keen to exact tribute from non-Muslims to be interested in mass forcible conversions. In any case, such conversions when they did take place were generally short-lived, the new converts taking the earliest opportunity to renounce their new faith with the retreat of the conqueror.

However, when Muslim power became consolidated under the Mughal dynasty, Islam's religious influence came to be more permanent and persistent. Bishop Leproy, in *Mankind and the Church* (London, 1907), extols the attraction of Muslim teaching for minds dissatisfied with the vagueness and subjectivity of a Pantheistic system of Thought (p. 286).

What struck Professor Arnold, as being most remarkable was that Islam had gained "its greatest and most lasting missionary triumphs" in times and places in which its political power had been weakest as in Southern India and East Bengal, and without any central organisation of missionary work as is found among the Christians. Although the history of Islam in, Southern India was not always peaceful, conversions by non-violent methods were regularly made to Islam from among the lower castes, to whom Islam brings deliverance from the disabilities attaching to the outcastes of the Hindu social system (p. 268). It had a permanent success in Lower Bengal, where "it brought in a higher conception of God, and a nobler idea of the brotherhood of man. It offered to the teeming low castes of Bengal, who had sat for ages abject on the outermost pale of the Hindu community, a free entrance into a new social organization (Sir W.W. Hunter: 'The Religions of India,' *The Times*, February 25, 1888).

Hindus were particularly attracted to the sufis and saints spread all over India, and flocked in large numbers to the tombs of Muslim saints. And often a childless father would present a petition to the God of the Muslims, and if children were born to him, apparently in answer to this prayer, the whole family would in such a case embrace Islam (*Gazetteer of the N. W.P.*, vol. VI, pp. 64, 238).

Another book, which deals exhaustively with this subject, *The Religious Quest of India*, by Dr. Titus, lays emphasis on the injustices of the Muslim Kings. Although this is not the subject of this article, it must be discussed because of the degree to which this misapprehension has been exaggerated. These so-called injustices bear no relation to Islam, being simply the kind of measures resorted to by any ruler, local or foreign, in order to crush political opponents and establish his own rule. This was routine policy, and did not originate in Islamic philosophy.

Dr. Titus first chapter, 'Forced Conversion,' is based on incidents, which are either quite isolated or devoid of historical content, such as the forcible circumcision of the Brahmins of Debul by Muhammad ibn Qasim. The writer's use of such expressions as 'I assume' 'we may be sure,' and 'we are told' in describing these incidents is a sure indication of their lack of authenticity. He is certainly not entitled to make such sweeping generalizations on the basis of slender evidences.

In a more balanced, and therefore more pertinent chapter, 'Peaceful Penetration,' he does acknowledge, however, that the majority of conversions took place by peaceful means, and like Professor Arnold, he also refers to the oppressive social conditions under which the low castes had been suffering in India. Any outcaste man, who wished to escape the insults and degradation imposed upon him by his social status, easily found a welcome freedom by accepting the benefit of a system of religion which has no outcastes, and which permits prince and sweeper to worship together in the house of God.

During the last fourteen hundred years, Islam has spread all over the world. It is worth noting that in no country is there any insistence that Islam was spread by the sword. It is only in India that this misconception has become engrained in the minds of the people. We have only to consider the case of Egypt to see just how erroneous this view is. In this ancient cradle of civilization, it took but a hundred years after the Muslim conquest for the majority of the inhabitants to embrace Islam. The Egyptologist, Sir Arthur Keith (1866-1955), writes:

"The Egyptians were conquered not by the sword, but by the Koran" (*A New Theory of Human Evolution*, London, Watts & Co., 1950, p. 303).

When Muslim armies invaded other countries, they were confronted not by the general public but by the ruler's army, whose duty it was to defend their king. Here the issue was not religious, but military. But once the king's armed guard had been defeated, it was frequently found that the ordinary people, tired of their own rulers' excesses, were already disaffected, and quite ready to embrace a new culture which guaranteed them equality, justice and freedom. As Professor Titus observes: "There can be no doubt that, during all the centuries of Islam in India, one of the very strongest assets has been the privilege of brotherhood, which it has held out freely to all who could come within the pale." When the Indian people came into close contact with the Muslims, many were so impressed by Islamic values, that, without anyone brandishing swords at them, they opted to enter its fold.

As a nineteenth century French writer puts it: "The simplicity and the clearness of this teaching are certainly among the most obvious forces at work in the religious and the missionary activity of Islam ... A creed so precise, so stripped of all the theological complexities and consequently so accessible to the ordinary understanding, might be expected to possess and does indeed possess a marvellous power of winning its way into the consciences of man" (Edouard Montet: *LA Propagande Chretienne et ses adversaires Musulmans*, pp. 17-18 (Paris, 1890).

(Farida Khanam)

Good deeds are nullified by disputes over religious matter

Awam ibn Hawshab records the Prophet as saying: "Beware of disputes in matters of religion, for they are liable to undo your good deeds."

(Ibn Abdul Barr)

Hard Working: The Only Option

Certain Muslim intellectuals insist that Muslims have become a backward community in this country, and that the only way to promote their uplift is to demand reservation in government services.

What is strange indeed is that these same intellectuals uphold the Muslims as '*the best community*' and with great fervour they call upon them to come forward and take charge of world leadership. Given that the Muslims are backward, such euphoric statements as 'The task of leading the world will be entrusted to you,' (*Liya jaye ga tujhse kaam duniya ki imamat ka*) are nothing but empty rhetoric. If the stage of world leadership has been waiting for them to set foot on it, then asking for concessions from the very people who are to be lead by them sounds utterly ridiculous.

There is a saying in English, which goes, 'Politics is the art of the possible.' In this world truly effective effort is that which is directed towards the possible. Straining after an impossible goal amounts to plunging towards destruction rather than heading towards success.

In the present circumstances, I find the securing of reservations almost impossible. The cause of reservation for Muslims was first taken up by Muhammad Ali Jinnah His well-known 14-point formula presented in 1929 was entirely based on the securing of concessions. He wanted the Congress to give its assurance that the constitution, which would be framed after independence, would guarantee the fourteen concessions drawn up by him. The eleventh of these fourteen points was that in the government services in India the proportion of Muslims would always be maintained in direct ratio to their population.

This proposal was made sixty five years ago. By conceding this demand the Indian leadership could have averted the division of the country. Yet it tolerated the division rather than accept the principle of reservation for the Muslims. Now what further power do the present Muslims possess to put pressure upon the Indian rulers to accede to a principle already rejected on the basis of the constitution. History shows that, in reality, this demand is not going to be met in this country. Basing the construction of one's life on something which is beyond reach is like constructing castles in the air, such as can never come into existence in this world of cause and effect.

Even supposing that the impossible were to become the possible, that is, Muslims were provided reservations according to the ratio of the population, the actual goal of removing the Muslims' backwardness would still not be attained.

The circulation of wealth in India through government services is only about five per cent of the national wealth. And now, when the public sector is on the way out, being gradually reduced in terms of a more liberal economy, the actual number of Muslims employed in government service would further decrease.

In such a situation, if the Muslims' progress were to be bound by the supposed reservation, then even after having secured it, the problem of their backwardness would not be solved: out of 12 crore (120 millions) Muslims hardly one per cent would earn their livelihood through government service. Then what would happen to the rest of the Muslim population? And if 99 per cent of the Muslims have to seek an alternative arrangement, why cannot that same arrangement suffice for the one per cent as well?

Certain Muslim intellectuals are constantly telling us that although Muslims comprise twelve per cent of the country's population, in government services their proportion has not increased beyond two per cent over a long period of time. They are at pains to point out that even after the education and training of Muslim youths has been arranged in educational institutions, and coaching centres have been established to enable many Muslim youths to pass in competitive examinations with flying colours, the proportion of two per cent in the services shows no signs of increasing.

This is only half the truth. Muslim intellectuals stress the fact that the proportion of two per cent in government services is unchanged despite their best efforts, but they do not tell us anything about the qualified Muslim youths. Where are they standing in the unemployment queue? At which recruitment windows have they been lining up unsuccessfully? Not unless this figure is presented will the story be complete.

If our friends would take the time to ascertain this figure, they would learn that the simple reason for Muslims' continuing to occupy two per cent of the available government posts is that they themselves, of their own choice, did not enter government service. They either left for the Middle East, Europe or America, as they knew only too well that in foreign countries they could command far better salaries on the basis of their qualifications. This exodus is common among both Hindu and Muslim youths on a large scale. To me, Muslims can find better guidance in the successful experience of the Sikh community instead of in the fanciful ideas of their misguided leaders and intellectuals.

Once I was present at a special meeting held in New Delhi at which many Hindus and Sikhs were present. One comparatively less educated Sikh complained that the government had been perpetrating great injustice upon the Sikhs; that at the time of India's independence the proportion of Sikhs in the Indian army was 30 per cent, while today their ratio has been reduced in these services to only two per cent. Interrupting this lecture, another Sikh came up to say that his brother had no knowledge of the real situation. Then he explained that it was true that there were certain reasons for the central government not being interested in keeping them in the military, and as a result their numbers had come down to a mere two per cent. But this had proved to be a blessing in disguise. When the Sikhs found that demands and agitations were not going to yield any fruit, as the government had been acting upon a well-considered plan, and that no amount of our protest was going to have any effect upon its policy, they did some hard thinking and finally came to the conclusion that they must be willing to accept the government's policy in the changed scenario.

Then he said, "Look at me, I was an officer in the Indian army, having retired recently from the service. After my retirement I received only seven lakh rupees as provident fund, etc. and with this sum I cannot even purchase a flat in Delhi. Whereas many of my friends who had opted to leave the services to take up business, now own palatial houses in Delhi, and drive luxury cars."

The number of Sikhs in military service has no doubt dwindled but their economic condition is now better than it ever was. They form only two per cent of the population of the country, but they control about 20 per cent of the country's economic resources. How did this come about? The reason was that they gave up the limited scope offered by the services in favour of the unlimited scope offered by business and industry. Many of them left for Europe and America, and are now earning far more than they could ever have done here. When such a course may be taken, why weep and wail over the paucity of posts available in government service?

If Muslims earnestly want to remove their economic backwardness, there is only one solution, and that is hard work. They should work hard in the fields of education, business and industry, and with greater preparation, must come to grips with the industrial age, which they have yet to enter.

They must fully appreciate that if a nation is left behind in life's journey, there is only one way to compensate for this, and that is to put in extra hard work. For any such nation the choice is not between hard work and gaining concessions but between hard work and destruction. That is the law of nature, and the nature's laws are immutable.

The demand for reservations and concessions is like asking the other group to keep their next generations from heading towards progress until such times as we (the Muslims) pull abreast of them and become their equals. You could not expect such a sacrifice even from your own real brother. Then how could you expect it from the members of any other community?

Muslims ought, therefore, to abandon the path of complaint and confrontation. They must exclude these words from their vocabulary, and should enter wholeheartedly, and with courage and conviction, into the modern fields of life. As soon as they are willing to do so, they will find a hundred doors opening up to them, and each of these doors will be far bigger and wider than the door of the government services.

All power is in the hands of God

The Prophet sent Dhammam ibn Thaalabah to the latter's own tribe – the Banu Saad ibn Baker – with instructions to tell them about the monotheism of Islam. Dhammam then came before his people and urged them to renounce idol worship. "How wicked the worship of Lat and Uzzah," he said, Lat and Uzzah being the names of the idols of saints that his people worshipped. They warned him not to speak in this way; he would fall a prey to leprosy or madness; he should be careful! Dhammam's answer to them was: "Woe betide you! By God, there is nothing that Lat and Uzzah can do to anyone by way of good or evil".

Towards a New India

When an enraged mob of Hindus demolished the Babari Masjid of Ayodhya on December 6, 1992, and replaced it with a makeshift mandir, this act was both climactic and terminal. It was not the peaking of an upsurge, but its end. Every destructive activity has an outer limit, and when this limit is reached, no further destruction can take place.

Those gifted with farsightedness realized on December 6 itself that this destructive moment, in accordance with the laws of nature, would lose momentum and come to naught. However, there were many who failed to come to a timely appreciation of history's verdict. They continued to fear another "December 6." Now, when the actual state of affairs has become an open book, there is no room for anyone to doubt that as from now, this dark chapter is finally closed, making way for brighter and more hopeful prospects in the history of India.

When it comes to the crunch, no such movement can proceed successfully without an enthusiastic response from the public. Once the public becomes apathetic such a movement loses ground and simply peters out. Events have shown that this is a dead issue. Neither Hindus nor Muslims have any zeal left for further action, it is no longer possible for leaders to whip either community to a frenzy on this score. This being so, why should there be any residual element, which still expects this movement to continue?

After the demolition of the Babari Masjid, the All India Muslim Personal Law Board held a meeting in November 1993 in Bombay, at which a resolution was passed that all the Muslims of India must assemble in the mosques on December 6, 1993, to pray for the recovery of the Babari Masjid. However, opinions differed on the date to be fixed, as the majority of the members felt that the Muslims would not, in fact, gather at the mosques on December 6. A via media was found by changing the date to December 3, three days in advance of the demolition date, because, December 3 being a Friday, the Muslims would, of their own accord be gathering in the mosques to offer namaz. In this way, there would at least be the outward appearance of the Muslims having observed that day, as a day of prayer for the Babari Mosque at the behest of their leaders.

December 6, 1994, was the second anniversary of Babari Masjid demolition. However, this time the All India Muslim Personal Law Board did not attempt to make any such announcement, even to make a show of there having been a demonstration. They had learnt with their very first experiment that Muslims had very soon dismissed the Babari Masjid issue from their minds. It was just not possible to mobilize them.

However, certain other leaders, who were not shrewd enough to acknowledge this, proceeded to announce the second anniversary of the Babari Masjid's demolition in grand style. Having formed the All

India Babari Masjid Rebuilding Committee – an organization which existed more on paper than in actuality – they announced that along with four thousand Muslims, they would march to Ayodhya on December 6, 1994, in order to say their Zuhr prayer in that mosque.

But the so-called Babari Masjid Rebuilding Committee failed miserably to arouse any fervour among Muslims on this issue. What in fact happened was that on December 5, 1994, a mere 50 Muslim zealots boarded a bus in Delhi, and when they were prevented by the police from going any further than Ghaziabad, they all quietly came back to Delhi without having clashed with the police. (*Qaumi Awaz*, December 6, 1994)

Certain Hindu leaders for their part announced that they would launch a campaign to assemble five lakh Hindus, who would celebrate the 'victory day' by entering into Ayodhya on December 6, 1994. But they too failed to rally their own people to the cause. All that happened was that just a few hundred Hindus reached Ayodhya and, after performing their routine pooja, they went back. The extremism of just a few Hindu leaders had no appeal for the masses.

It is an undeniable fact that both the Hindu and Muslim public have already put the issue of Ayodhya behind them. It is high time now that both communities diverted their full attention to more constructive activities.

The editorial of the *Hindustan Times* of December 8, 1994, entitled 'Hope on Ayodhya' points out that it is to the credit of the nation that the second anniversary of the demolition of the Babari Masjid passed off without any untoward happenings in any part of the country. Time has been a great healer. The bitterness and bad blood generated two years ago in the wake of the Ayodhya tragedy seem to be disappearing. It is evident that the public are no longer willing to follow their leaders on this issue. They are not going to allow themselves to be led into excess in the name of religion. There seems also to be a parallel change in the attitude of the Sangh Parivar, if the very conspicuous absence of the V.H.P. supremo, Mr. Ashok Singhal, from Ayodhya on December 6, 1994, is anything to go by.

It would be wholly accurate to say that the reason for the present low-key approach of the leaders to this issue is the poor response from the people to their aggressive stance. Where the participation of the public had bloated the matter out of all proportion, its present non-cooperation will deal it a death blow. It is seldom that the public can be aroused more than once on issues of such intense emotionalism. With the passage of time, the pressure of the actual problems of life comes into play as a check on any such arousal. No nation can fail to see the error of attempting to make a non-issue into an issue over a long period of time.

It is human nature to look towards the future and consign the past into oblivion – a law of nature to which Indians would do well to bow. It should be appreciated that present circumstances – with all obstacles cleared from the path are now fully ripe for non-partisan action of a positive and constructive nature.

The majority of people in India are either illiterate or semiliterate. Approximately half of the country's population is suffering from poverty and unemployment. Corruption of all kinds has led the country to the verge of ruination. Nowhere is justice obtainable in the courts. The goals of sterling character and national unity are yet to be attained. A number of problems of increasing gravity are still facing our country. The plight of our nation simple cries out for new solutions and freshness of approach.

It is, therefore, the duty of all concerned persons to identify and grasp whatever opportunities present themselves for the construction of new India.

A true believer shows no hesitation in answering the call of the Almighty

The chapter entitled 'Table' of the Qur'an contains this divine injunction: "Believers, wine and games of chance, idols and divining arrows, are abominations devised by the devil. Avoid them, so that you may prosper. The devil seeks to stir up enmity and hatred among you by means of wine and gambling, and to keep you from the remembrance of God, and from your prayers. Will you not abstain from them?" (5:90-91). When this verse of the Qur'an was revealed, the Prophet, as was customary on such occasions, recited it to the Companions. When he reached the end of the verse – "Will you not abstain from them?" – every one of the Companions shouted out: "We have abstained from them, Lord. We have abstained from them."